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**489**

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FEBRUARY 20-MARCH 5, 2014

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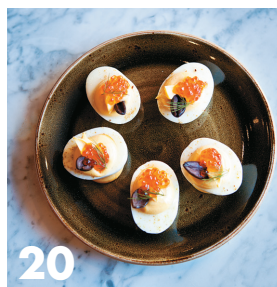
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## ONLINE

### ON THE COVER

The Curb Appeal of John Gidding. Meet him at the Minneapolis Home + Garden Show which runs from February 26-March 2. More information at [www.homeandgardenshow.com](http://www.homeandgardenshow.com). Photo Courtesy of Marketplace Events



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## CONTRIBUTORS



E.B. BOATNER



PAT EVANS



SHANE LUECK



NELL GELHAUS



STEVE LENIUS



CARLA  
WALDEMAR



JOHN TOWNSEND



RANDY STERN



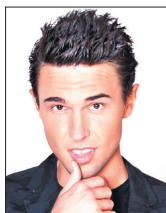
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# LAVENDER®

Volume 19, Issue 489 • February 20-March 5, 2014

### Editorial

**Managing Editor** Andy Lien 612-436-4671

**Editorial Assistants** Linda Raines 612-436-4694, Shane Lueck

**Editor Emeritus** Ethan Boatner 612-436-4670

**Editorial Associate** George Holdgrafer 612-436-4672

**Copy Editor** Bridget Rocheford-Kearney

**Contributors** Pat Evans, Nell Gelhaus, Ed Huyck, Justin Jones, Ellen Krug, Steve Lenius, Jennifer Parello, John Townsend, Carla Waldemar, Randy Stern, Shane Lueck, Kathleen Watson

### Advertising

**Sales & Advertising Director** Barry Leavitt 612-436-4690

**Senior Account Executive** Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699

**Account Executives** Richard Kranz 612-436-4675,  
Morgan Ross 612-436-4697

**Advertising Associate** George Holdgrafer 612-436-4672

**Sales & Advertising Traffic Coordinator**  
Linda Raines 612-436-4694

**Sales Appointments** Michelle Ulmer 612-436-4693

**Classifieds** Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699

**National Sales Representative** Rivendell Media  
212-242-6863

### Creative

**Creative Director** Hubert Bonnet 612-436-4678

**Graphic Designer** Mike Hnida 612-436-4679

**Photographer** Sophia Hantzes

**Lavender Studios** Hubert Bonnet, Mike Hnida,  
Austin Lindstrom

### Administration

**Publisher** Lavender Media, Inc.

**President & CEO** Stephen Rocheford 612-436-4665

**Vice President & CC** Pierre Tardif 612-436-4666

**Chief Financial Officer** Carolyn Lima 612-436-4664

**Administrative Assistant** Austin Lindstrom 612-436-4661

**Founders** George Holdgrafer, Stephen Rocheford

**Inspiration** Steven W. Anderson (1954-1994), Timothy J. Lee (1968-2002), Russell Berg (1957-2005), Kathryn Rocheford (1914-2006), Jonathan Halverson (1974-2010), Adam Houghtaling (1984-2012), Walker Pearce (1946-2013)

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### Lavender Media, Inc.

3715 Chicago Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55407  
[LavenderYellowPages.com](http://LavenderYellowPages.com)

612-436-4660 **Office**

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# Destigmatizing Significance

Big words. Bigger meaning. “Destigmatizing significance” has been a concept I’ve been mulling over since Sally Jenkins used it on February 10, 2014, in her piece in *The Washington Post* about Michael Sam coming out as the (likely) first gay NFL player. The piece is called “Michael Sam’s courageous decision to come out resonates from the NFL to Sochi.” She said that his “watershed act” has “enormous destigmatizing significance.” I could not agree more.

A definition of “destigmatize” keeps it simple in that it “removes disgraceful characterization” from something. Does this concept bring anything else to mind? I immediately thought of the Vote No and marriage equality campaigns that preceded the legalization of same-sex marriage in Minnesota. Remember those conversations we had with anyone who would listen (and some that wouldn’t)? They were a grand effort of destigmatizing significance. By putting faces to the people and relationships of the topics of same-sex marriage and equal rights, the conversations about why love matters to people who love people of the same sex removed disgraceful characterization of the GLBT community, one conversation at a time. But, with so many people out there having these conversations, the results were great and the ripple effect caused a sea change in Minnesota. Can we say that same-sex marriage is destigmatized in Minnesota? That the GLBT community is without disgraceful characterization? No, not entirely, but—like it or not—the legalization of it sure helps in legitimizing not only the relationships of this community, but the existence of the community, itself.

It seems that destigmatizing same-sex marriage perhaps had to come before we covered rainbow families more broadly. I don’t agree with marriage affecting the “legitimacy” or “illegitimacy” of children or families or bonds, but there’s a definite “horse” and “cart” in terms of the bigger picture in our culture. Marriage is what our culture tends to look to before it recognizes children as being part of a family unit, despite single-parent households and same-sex adoptive parents and surrogacy; despite the fact that so many families existed before same-sex marriage was—and is—legal. And now, after the *legalization* of same-sex marriage, we look to the increased cultural *legitimization* of same-sex marriage...and to the broader legitimization of same-sex parent families. That legitimization requires destigmatization: we must make these families more culturally significant by removing disgraceful characterization of them. And, to do that, we must continue to remove the disgraceful characterization of the GLBT community. It is probably more of an ongoing and circular issue than simply one of putting the horse before the cart.

Being a free magazine that is out on stands in hundreds and hundreds of locations as well as online, our audience could be anyone. I think about that as I plan content: what role does *Lavender* play as it is seen out in the wild? Does *Lavender* have “destigmatizing significance?” Can *Lavender* be a part of removing the disgraceful characterization of the GLBT community? Of same-sex couples? Of same-sex parent families?

Absolutely.

When we were working on this first Children & Family Quarterly and I was considering the Rainbow Resources spread, I had a thought that we should incorporate some more child-like designs. You know, for all the kids reading *Lavender*. RAINBOWS AND UNI-

CORNS AND GLITTER AND SCRAWLY HANDWRITING. And then I remembered that kids aren’t really our audience. We can’t be everything to everybody, but we can be something to everyone who knows kids. I include some very adult topics in our issues and we throw in some swear words, so we couldn’t give ourselves a resounding kid-friendly rating. So, I kept my Backseat Art Director mouth shut and let the design fall how it may and it’s very “adult” and mature. I approve. It suits the audience.

And who is our audience?

Anybody.

There’s a difference between writing for an audience and recognizing who the audience actually is.

While we don’t write for kids, I hope that kids do pick up *Lavender* and see all of the examples of how to be part of the GLBT community that we present. Sure, there might not be rainbows or unicorns to signify what they should pay attention to, but they’re savvy. They can figure out what applies to them and what doesn’t. It may be in an obvious way, or an abstract way, or both. If they find a children’s book in this issue catches their eye, great. If their families look like Our Lavender Family in this issue, wonderful. But, if they read Nell’s piece about how ridiculous Putin’s anti-gay posturing is in Russia, even better. If they see themselves in any pages, *in any way*, that’s the best.

If kids feel less disgrace because of seeing themselves in our pages, we have truly achieved something of “destigmatizing significance” that will have lasting, cross-generational impact. If being a media platform of “destigmatizing significance” makes *Lavender* into the “gay propaganda” that Putin fears as having detrimental and negative impact on the children of Russia, then we are succeeding. If a kid sees in these pages that “It Gets Better,” we are succeeding.

Thank you for being part of the content that we package and represent to the community, because the community—our wide audience—needs to see itself. It needs to see how the stigmas are loosening and being left behind. And it needs to continue this work to ensure that they stay left behind.



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# Land of the Free, Home of Zero Tolerance for Diversity?

I didn't watch the recent Super Bowl and its attendant commercials, and so was dumbfounded to read a number of violent reactions to Coca-Cola's ad, titled, "It's Beautiful," in which people of different ethnicities sang parts of "America the Beautiful" in their native languages.

I watched the clip on the Internet, and the whole seemed rather sweet, almost pedestrian, not something to inflame the sensibilities, and, while there was praise, there were many: "Speak English or go home," directives, and potential boycotters huffing, "Screwed up a beautiful song. No Coke for my family."

Interestingly enough, while the ad also included two gay dads roller skating with their daughter—a GLBT Super Bowl first—they were trumped by the non-English card, even though some of the outraged displayed a less than firm grasp of their mother tongue: "Dear @CocaCola : America the beautiful is sang in English. Piss off." (sic all)

Others believe "America the Beautiful" is our national anthem. "F you coke the national anthem wasn't made for your gook and Mexican talking. STFU! Speak English;" and "@pepsi as long as you don't sing our national anthem in different languages, you have my vote

over @CocaColaCo."

James Poniewozik of *Time* reminded that we do speak English in America, in most circumstances, but that "People like my immigrant mother and her immigrant sisters learn English as adults and raise their kids to speak it, and also speak French and Arabic at family get-togethers and on phone calls. We speak English in school and Spanish with grandparents and Spanglish with friends. We speak Creole and Chinese and Tagalog sitting down to family dinners—maybe with a bottle or two of Coke around the table, which is why Coke is smart to recognize this."

Look anywhere and you will discover diversity. The lyrics of "America the Beautiful" were written by Wellesley professor Katherine Lee Bates, whose book of sonnets, *Yellow Clover: A Book of Remembrance*, honors her love for Katherine Coman, with whom she lived for twenty-five years.

I fear a regression into the kind of isolationism that imprisoned Native American children in missionary schools, forbidden to speak their language and barred from their culture. A homogenized, all-English, ethnicity-obliterated population would be a terrible loss on many levels. ■



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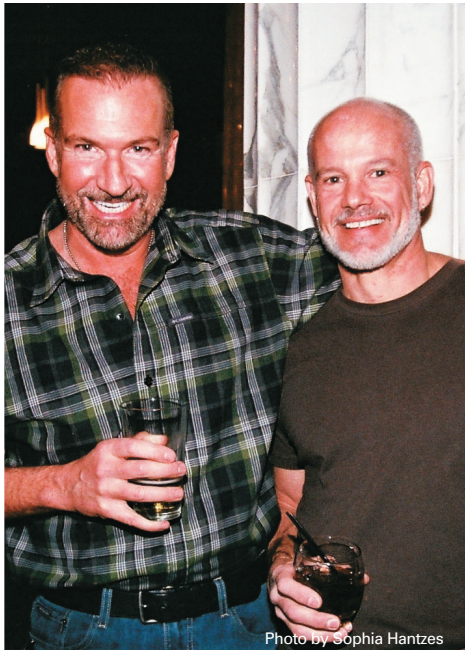
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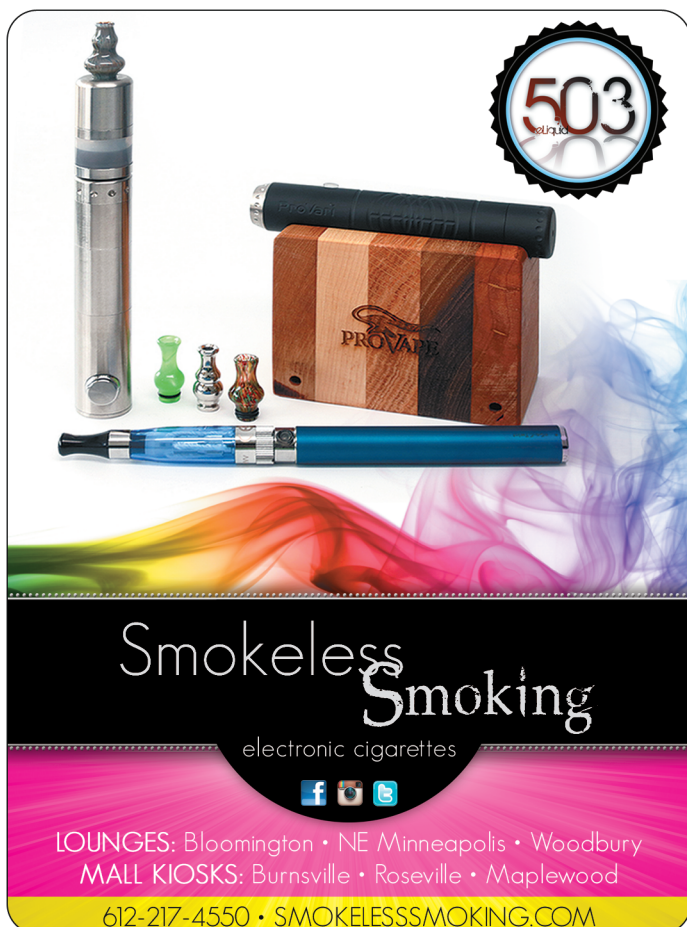
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### ELDER ISOLATION IN THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY – CONCERNS. RISKS. SOLUTIONS.

Thursday, February 27 • 6-9pm

The Center for Changing Lives • 2400 Park Ave. S., Minneapolis

Seniors in the LGBTQ community face a far greater risk of isolation, discrimination and abuse than other members of their generation. According to the 2012 Twin Cities LGBTQ Aging Needs Assessment Survey Report, they are more likely to live alone and less likely to have children to look after them as they age. LGBTQ elders are less likely to have a caregiver – yet ironically, are likely to be caregivers themselves. Even in our enlightened society, all too many die alone, forgoing medical care in order to avoid humiliation and abuse. Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly, in partnership with Prime Timers MSP, present a forum to raise awareness and explore solutions to the risks of elder isolation in the LGBTQ community.

6pm: Showing of the award-winning documentary, Gen Silent

7-9pm: Panel and discussion featuring:

- Paul Bloom, Owner and CEO, Right at Home, Bloomington
- Cathy Croghan, MPH, RN, co-author 2012 Twin Cities LGBTQ Aging Needs Assessment Survey
- Jay Haapala, Associate State Director-Community Outreach, AARP Minnesota
- Tara Patet, Sr. Prosecutor, St. Paul City Attorney's Office
- Julie Switzer, MD, Director of Geriatric Orthopedic Trauma, Regions Hospital

FREE admission and refreshments will be served. RSVP today: info@littlebrothersmn.org or 612-746-0726.

### WILDE ROAST CAFÉ'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION March 1-10

Wilde Roast Café • 65 Main St. SE, Minneapolis

The Wilde Roast Café has been serving up great drinks and food to their neighbors in NE Minneapolis and across the Twin Cities for the last ten years. To celebrate their 10-year anniversary this March, they've announced a grand celebration party, writing contest, prizes, giveaways and special offers.

The highlight of their celebration is a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party on Thursday, March 6, 2014 from 8-10pm. The event will feature musical entertainment by local cabaret artist Erin Schwab with Jay Fuchs, a special menu with some of their most popular items, and guests will get a free glass of Wilde Punch.

Each day from March 1-10, customers can stop in to the Wilde Roast Café and celebrate their anniversary with:

- Free giveaways from 7-9am, 3-5pm and 9-11pm that include free coffee, gelato and muffins (while supplies last).
- Scratch-off cards with a grand prize of a \$250 Wilde Roast Café gift card, plus 50% off and buy one get one free deals, free coffee, and other exciting prizes (while supplies last).
- 10 Belly Points per visit, which is twice the points of their normal rewards program.
- Back for a limited time: Trinity College Tuna Melt and their fantastic Tuna Salad.

**March 17th** (St. Patrick's Day): in honor of Oscar Wilde's Irish heritage, they'll be serving up a delicious Guinness Pie.

The Wilde Roast Writing Contest: Share your Wilde Roast Café story - a memorable moment at the café, a great date, inspiration that struck over a latte... and win a \$500 Wilde Roast Café Party! It can be an essay, poem, or whatever format you'd like. Email your story to oscar@wilderostcafe.com with the subject line "My WRC Story". Entries will be posted on their Facebook page, and voted on by friends of the Wilde Roast Café. Stories are due March 1, 2014.



| BY BARRY LEAVITT

For more information, visit [www.wilderoast-cafe.com](http://www.wilderoast-cafe.com).



Thomas DeGree and Dean Schlaak, owners of Wilde Roast Café. Photo by E. Katie Holm

#### Mad for Plaid Bowling

Sunday, March 2 • 1:45-4pm

Park Tavern • 3401 Louisiana Ave. S., St. Louis Park

Join Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Twin Cities for this fun annual event wearing your favorite plaid attire while bowling for equality! Registration includes 2 hours of bowling, shoe rental and a HRC membership (normally \$35)! Troll those closets or a thrift shop and wear your best plaid. Find your 70s polyester, 90s grunge, or your latest hipster outfit. Search "Twin Cities Mad for Plaid Bowling" on Facebook for more info and tickets.

#### Stillwater Home & Garden Show

Saturday, March 1 • 10am-3pm

Rutherford Elementary School • 115 Rutherford Rd., Stillwater

For the person who loves remodeling, gardening, do-it-yourself projects, it's a great weekend for you. Not only is the Minneapolis Home & Garden Show going on February 26 – March 2, but you can also head to the east metro on March 1 for the Stillwater Home & Garden Show. The event includes more than 80 local exhibitors, helpful seminars, kid's educational activities, drawings, giveaways, and prizes. It's another great opportunity to experience what's new for your home and garden in 2014. Visit [www.stillwaterhomeshow.com](http://www.stillwaterhomeshow.com) for more information. ■

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Luciana achugar of *Otro Teatro*. Photo by Gene Pittman Walker Art Center

## ASHLAND

Through Feb. 22  
Illusion Theater  
528 Hennepin Av., Mpls.  
[www.illusiontheater.org](http://www.illusiontheater.org)

The Dust Bowl that occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s was a natural cataclysm that had dreadful human and economic consequences. When mechanized farming techniques took root in the previous decade, five million acres that had never been farmed were plowed. Overproduction of wheat and not planting drought-resistant grasses led to low market prices, erosion, and the loss of topsoil. Spectacular dust storms destroyed property as well as injured and killed people and livestock.

The Transatlantic Love Affair troupe has revived their compelling 2012 Minnesota Fringe Festival smash, *Ashland*, which observes the toll the Dust Bowl took. This beguiling production has been conceived and directed by Diogo Lopes. His ensemble of actors physicalize people of the time and use their voices to portray the sounds of nature. Since it's part of Illusion Theater's Lights Up series, this Dust Bowl mini-epic has been expanded with scenes that dig deeper into both the ecological and economic elements that traumatized the central part of the United States. Not to be missed.

## NEBRASKA

Area Movie Theaters

If you ever get sick of the way national media talkers from Ed Schulz on the Left to any number of far-out cats on the Right wax sentimental about the American 'Heartland,' then Alexander Payne's new comic masterwork, *Nebraska*, is the film for you. The splendid Bruce Dern plays Woody Grant, a partially senile senior citizen who thinks he has won a Publisher's Clearinghouse type of sweepstakes. So he starts walking to Lincoln, Nebraska, where the swindler's office is located to collect his fortune. His

son, David, played lovingly by Will Forte, tries to stop him, but when he sees he cannot break through his father's delusion, being the sweetheart that he is, he takes off work and drives him there.

En route, they stop in Hawthorne, Nebraska, where Woody grew up. The place is economically tattered and Woody's relatives are absurdly mediocre. Payne's wonderfully goofy cast ruthlessly reveals the pettiness, jealousy, and disinterest in the world around them, incapacity for compassion, and obsession with money that are too often politely ignored when we chat about small town and rural America. (I can hear Ed Schulz and Rush Limbaugh puffing up as I write this.) What's also interesting is that the film doesn't even have to even peek into issues like meth, local political corruption, or religious extremities—tried and true staples of small town and rural America—to give us piercing satire. It questions the core values of what's thought of as the salt-of-the-earth Midwesterner.



*Ashland*. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Fringe Festival

Bob Nelson's brilliant original script contains one of the brassiest characters to come along in a film in quite a while: Woody's graphically verbal wife, Kate, is given a knockout portrayal worthy of an Oscar by June Squibb. She turns any stereotypes about seniors on their head like few characters you've ever seen.

Of course, there *are* awesome people in the Heartland! No doubt about it! But sentimentalizing them isn't honoring them. And satirizing the mediocrities who so often *make* the awesome rural and small town folks' lives hell is a good thing. Two of Woody's couch potato nephews, played perfectly by Tim Driscoll and Devin Ratray, exemplify the young American man who lives in

a little boy's world with little boy misinterpretations of how things work. They're priceless in a disgusting kind of way. Moreover, Phedon Papamichael's black and white cinematography of the Great Plains and human interaction on them is an awe-inspiring vision reminiscent of *Hud* and *The Last Picture Show*. Mark Orton's music is sublime.

## OTRO TEATRO

Feb. 27 – Mar. 1  
Walker Art Center  
1750 Hennepin Av., Mpls.  
(612) 375-7600  
[www.walkerart.org](http://www.walkerart.org)

Just a brief note before I proceed. The Walker Art Center was a place that was very special and dear to the late great 'Joan of Art,' Joan Mondale. When recognizing what a mecca the Twin Cities are, you must acknowledge her for being an engine in creating and developing the Twin Cities as a kind of Athens of the North, a mecca for artistry and education. She was central in the growth and development of the Walker Art Center. In the years of Mrs. Mondale's life, the Walker expanded its programming so it could reflect global trends that otherwise would not have ever been available to the state and the region, as well as being inclusive of smaller area arts organizations and commissions that combine local artists and those from beyond the region. What we could call contemporary tradition and innovation have made the Walker the most important art center between Chicago and the west coast.

Luciana achugar's *Otro Teatro* is an example of such partnerships. Senior Performing Arts Curator Philip Bither relates: "Traversing the lines between human and animal, performance and ritual, past and future, spectator and participant, luciana has created a distinctive and powerful brand of performance theater, one that utilizes the human body and the human voice as core elements. achugar's comical, virtuosic *Molton Substance* was one of the standout hits of the recent Zenon's 30th Anniversary season and it led them to want to work together again. Our upcoming world premier *Otro Teatro*, takes the fantastic Zenon dancers—and other key members of



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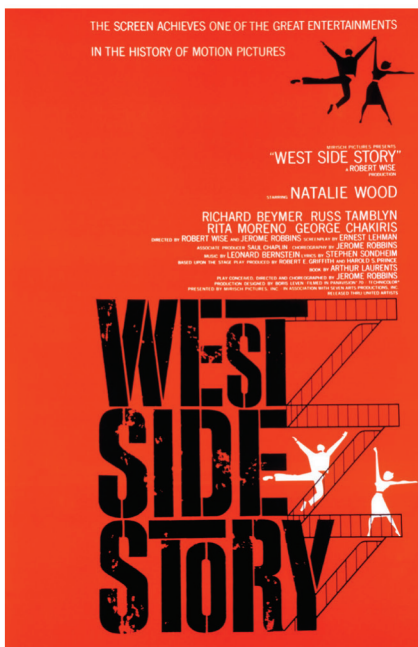
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our local dance and performance communities—as well as her own NYC company members into previously uncharted, provocative territories of intensity and interactivity. It is clear to me why so many on the contemporary New York dance scene consider luciana to be one of the under-recognized iconoclasts of our time.”

## PRINTS

Through Mar. 8  
Minneapolis Theatre Garage  
711 W. Franklin, Mpls.  
[www.torchtheater.com](http://www.torchtheater.com)

Director Craig Johnson reflects, “When John Middleton brought his script, *Prints*, to Torch Theater, artistic director Stacia Rice and I immediately recognized in it the same qualities that John brings to his acting—sly wit, great theater smarts, a quiet passion lurking beneath the surface, and a strong moral vision. *Prints* combines local history like the Minnesota kidnapping of William Hamm, Jr. in 1933 with real-life gangsters, Creepy Karpis and Ma Barker, plus the young J. Edgar Hoover and a couple of intrepid investigative reporters in hot pursuit. I loved how John spins the tale with the snap and breathless pace of great Hollywood movies of the period like *The Thin Man* and *The Front Page*. It’s the first time Torch has produced a new play, and we’re excited to have it be *Prints*.”

With all the Depression Era crime references, you can imagine that Middleton has been influenced by film noir. He shares, “As a kid growing up in Wisconsin I absorbed a lot of terrible advice from those movies about smoking cigarettes and drinking whiskey and facing dangerous situations with a smart remark. But, more constructively, I grew up loving the way grownups talked in those films. It was funny and muscular and absurd and a little dangerous. It wasn’t proper. It was the language of crooked cops and goodhearted crooks, prostitutes and bums, dock workers, taxi drivers, bartenders, luses, and losers. But in the hands of people like Dashiell Hammet and Raymond Chandler and in the mouths of people like Humphrey Bogart and Myrna Loy, it was music. It was a thrilling jumble—energetic, playful, and very American.”



*Prints*. Photo Thomas Sandelands



*Tristan & Yseult*. Photo by Steve Tanner

## THE SUN SERPENT

Through Mar. 22  
Mixed Blood Theatre's Alan  
Page Auditorium  
1501 S. 4th St., Mpls.  
[www.mixedblood.com](http://www.mixedblood.com)

The arrival of the Spanish in Mexico is one of the most consequential events in history. Colossal on a scale comparable to the sack of Troy or the bombing of Hiroshima. When Hernando Cortes and his conquistadors arrived, many Aztecs thought he was Quetzalcoatl, the Sun Serpent superbeing who would free them from the tyranny of Montezuma. A classic case of rejecting the devil you know for the devil you don't know. Playwright Jose Cruz Gonzalez tells the story through the eyes of two brothers who take opposing sides.

Director Rachel Bowditch explains that “*The Sun Serpent* is the result of a two-year devising process from idea to script. Embedded within the macro story of the conquest is the intimate story of a boy and his brother who are forced to take sides—one brother joining against the Aztecs and the other fighting to preserve the memory of his ancestors and culture that was being brutally erased. The unique challenge of staging such an epic tale is to create a magical theatrical universe where the children are transported into another world.”

## TRISTAN & YSEULT

Through Mar. 23  
Guthrie Theater  
818 So. 2nd St., Mpls.  
[www.guthrietheater.org](http://www.guthrietheater.org)

Before King Arthur, there was Tristan. His adulterous love for Yseult and the cuckolding of her husband, King Mark, is one of the towering medieval epic stories. However, there are so many versions of the story that it's difficult to know just what the original narrative was in specifics. The love potion the lovers ingest, in some versions, lasts their lifetimes and, in others, it wears off over time. So it seems a likely choice for adaptation by the fun-loving postmodern Kneehigh troupe from Great Britain whose international tour of their adaptation now plays the Guthrie.

Kneehigh loves to fiddle around with interpretations of classic stories. For example, their spin on the Cornwall tale gives us the music of Nick Cave, aerial antics, and binoculars. In recent years, Kneehigh played the Guthrie with a dizzying take on Noel Coward's *Brief Encounter*. Local audiences and critics loved it and *Tristan & Yseult* promises to be as good or better. Reviews in the UK have been borderline raves. Their presence at the Guthrie is a great example of the Big G's commitment to making excellent work from overseas available as part of the regular season. ■



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## OUR SCENE

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# coup d'état



Overthrowing Uptown (from left): Jacob Toledo (J.T.), Owner; Nick O'Leary, Chef/Owner; and Tyler Shipton, Chef/Owner.

## UPTOWN'S CLASSY COUP

When I moved to the Twin Cities 20 years ago, I can't believe it's been that long, one of the first places I felt at home was Uptown. From the diversity of food to its eclectic people, I felt the vibe. But, like some love affairs, over the years, passion cooled and we grew apart. The new and welcoming coup d'état could very well change that.

Even before you take a bite of the French- and Mediterranean-inspired food, there is something satisfying about this fresh addition to the Minneapolis restaurant and bar scene. The place is gorgeous. Tall ceilings

with spectacular sparkling chandeliers, herringbone wood floors, and a giant 25-wide chalkboard menu spread high above the open kitchen are jaw-dropping. Think upscale French café but not too fussy.

"We wanted this to be approachable but different," co-owner Jacob Toledo tells me. "When someone says, 'Oh my god, that bone marrow is amazing,' I know we have hit it. We wanted to mix comfort foods with small special things that everyone can share."

Being at the corner of Girard and Lagoon Avenues is kind of a déjà vu



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Pat, Jesse, and Luke...the “Not As Cool Hand Luke” cocktail.

experience for Toledo and his business partner, Brent Frederick. They were managing partners of Cowboy Slim’s which stood on the same site. (Campiello before Slim’s.) That experience helped them cut their teeth for their next acclaimed ventures, the upscale Borough and Parlour in the North Loop. Many of the same people who helped them make that a success have traveled to Uptown, clearly hoping the magic follows them.

“We are keeping the same high quality of food and ingredients and attention to detail as Borough, but delivering it in a fun and relaxed atmosphere,” Chef Nick O’Leary explained. “We want everyone to feel comfortable coming in to relax over great food and drinks no matter if you are casual in shorts and a t-shirt or dressed up for the evening.” O’Leary is part of the kitchen triumvirate which also includes Twin Cities culinary stars Joe



Rolle and Tyler Shipton.

Cocktail maestro Jesse Held has also made the move. “We’re not as booze-forward over here,” he said while stirring up “Not As Cool Hand Luke,” a reinterpreted whiskey sour. “Our easy drinking menu is more seasonal, and we’ll offer aperitif and wines along with cocktails. But you can still get an Old Fashioned here,” referring to a Parlour favorite.

When spring finally arrives, you’ll be able to sip those cocktails outside. There’s outdoor seating on two levels, all the better to take in the changing Uptown scene. Now can you understand why I think this love affair just might be rekindled after all? ■

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Louisville skyline. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com

# Louisville

## WHERE QUEER IS DEAR

"I'm James, and I'll be your God," drawled the leader of Churchill Downs' backside tour in honeyed southern tones. Why not? For worshippers of horse racing, Louisville—the track's home—has long been synonymous with heaven.

The city's also the Holy See of Bourbon, with legendary distilleries dotting the bluegrass countryside, a new distillery smack-dab in the middle of Main Street with three more soon to follow, and an Urban Bourbon Trail saluting bars and cafés that carry upwards of 150 labels. The two unite on Derby Day, watching the race sipping a Mint Julep, as James, our god—er, guide, extolled.

Bourbon also spikes (pardon me) the city's quirky arts scene, if you count the sculpture of Jesus in a Jim Beam bottle entitled "Holy Spirit" at the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, which also gives homage to its food culture via a party dress sewn of Dum Dum wrappers.

In a red state, Louisville is a welcome palette of blue: diverse, accepting, creative. Main Street's Museum Row includes the gallery in the 21C Hotel, which makes our own Graves look like a Howard Johnson (five-foot pink penguins in the halls and Michelangelo's supersized, full-frontal David on the sidewalk). The installation of fabric seagulls above its restaurant tables bears the title "What the

Flock?"—a fact I noted while swooning over its cheese grits, easily the best in the galaxy. Oh, and at nearby Actors Theater, home of the renowned Humana Festival for New Plays (debuts by playwrights worldwide, including, in years past, our own Dominique Serrand and Kevin Kling) an über-bawdy, sublimely delicious presentation of *Tom Jones* involved a lot of likker, maybe closer to moonshine than Bourbon, but Louisville does that, too. Cafés like Hillbilly Tea not only serve moonshine, but moonshine By. The. Flight. along with Bourbon bread pudding, pulled pork on 'pone, and roadkill stew; also, liver pâté on bacon toast with basil-braised figs, proving even hillbillies subscribe to *Saveur*.

Anyone who aspires to be a distiller can take lessons (classes for mere enthusiasts, too) at Distilled Spirits Epicenter's Moonshine University. Those (read: everyone) eager to learn how Bourbon's made and the proper tasting method can tour the brand-new Evan Williams Distillery on Main Street—maker of the world's second-highest seller, Heaven Hill—to sniff, swirl, swallow, and evaluate at the old-time bar.

Bourbon—well, the barrels, anyway—lend themselves to micro-brewing soy sauce at Bourbon Barrel Foods (find their smoked seasonings at Kitchen Window), whose soy and Kentuckyaki are in





(From left) **Bourbon tasting room at the brand-new Evan Williams Distillery.** Photo courtesy of the Louisville Convention Bureau; **Col. Sanders, one of the town heroes.** Photo by Carla Waldemar; **Derby at Churchill Downs.** Photo courtesy of the Louisville Convention Bureau.

demand by the rock-star chefs of the land. Why, I asked proprietor Matt Jamie, is Southern food so hot right now? (A restaurant cannot open without pork belly on the menu, right?) The renaissance, says Matt, is fueled by three factors: "It's comfort food, it's easy, and it's not expensive—no prime cuts of meat involved. The recipes are our history and heritage," he underscores, instructing me to eat at Wagner's, a short-order dive aside Churchill Downs since 1928. There, after watching the morning's workout—so close to the track you can hear every thump, every snort—I ogled trainers and their groupies while shoveling biscuits and gravy into my mouth at Derby speed.

Bourbon lends itself to pork—in Louisville, as inseparable as ham and eggs or PBJ. To acclimatize your tastebuds, sign on for the new Louisville Food Tour ([LouisvilleFoodTour.com](http://LouisvilleFoodTour.com)), which walks foodies through Nu Lu which was, until recently, vagrants' turf, but now reclaimed by forward galleries, indie boutiques, and chef-driven cafés. We stop at six of those artisanal kitchens for samplings with a side of backstory. Against the Grain, a brewpub, proffered pork belly on a stick with Kentucky sorghum, atop white bean purée with cornbread crumbles and a glass of Citra Ass Down Ale.

At Wiltshire, Chef John Exon, who cooks for eight tables, explains, "My food is very personal—lots of confits and braises," like the pork belly he plates with fried rice and kimchee. Le Coup, a classic French bistro of 42 seats, is where Chef Bobby Bergman slow-cooks his pork belly for a week, then bakes it three more days "so the fat can penetrate." (Thanks for sharing.) His "lard de maison" is a fancy name for pork belly with sweet potatoes, and it's yummy. So is a signature salad of Bourbon pecans and blue-cheese ice cream, which we savored with a sip of his Versailles cocktail: Bourbon, ginger liqueur, sweet vermouth, and lemon. Rye, its neighbor, caused me to swoon at the mere sight of pork belly toast on the menu. Nearby, Decca (vintage vinyl for sale upstairs and live music below) offers a wood-grilled pork chop, but I held out for even humbler fare: braised beef cheek over cavatelli noodles showered with buttermilk ricotta; a Parmesan risotto centered with an ultra-fresh farm egg; and shrimp atop polenta, just a fancy name for luscious grits. The Garage Bar—

just as anti-schmancy as it sounds—scores with a ham bar: tastings of four pig producers, as well as pork meatballs and pancetta flavoring its brick-oven pizzas.

Steer over to Bardstown Road—another fab food trail—to Sevice, for Latin influences punctuating Kentucky products, like 24-hour pork belly with Bourbon and sorghum; fried green tomatoes with habaneros; and a signature tuna sevice with bluegrass soy and Bourbon.

Okay, okay: Man cannot live by the underbelly alone. Time to spruce up for a visit to 610 Magnolia, where Chef Edward Lee (a James Beard kinda guy) provides a tasting menu of local viands-gone-elite. Our Wayzata-born server ("It just got too cold there") whispered, as if offering cocaine on the sly, that the café had just scored a rare allotment of Pappy van Winkel Bourbon. Would I like to try it? (Is the Pope Catholic?) Sublimely smooth, with just a drop of "branch" (water). It ushered in a starter of frog leg confit with watercress pistou and a 68-degree egg, while my pals whimpered over langoustines with uni tongue (I didn't know, either: a shellfish of sorts) and fingerlings with potato foam. Next, chestnut-ricotta agnolotti with chestnuts, pumpkin seeds, sage, and—huh?—banana.

My coffee-rubbed venison sported smoked sweet potatoes, while my pals' pork loin saluted autumn with squash, sunchokes, and kale. While they enjoyed apple cake with butterscotch and thyme gelée, Granny Smith ice cream, and (!) bacon powder, I dared the foie gras sponge cake with fig purée, fig-balsamic ice cream, and sorrel. At Sunday brunch at the grande-dame Seelbach Hotel (F. Scott Fitzgerald and Al Capone both beat me to it), I feasted on oysters, lamb chops with artichokes, duck in mole sauce, and Bourbon bread pudding, along with an amber glass of Angel's Envy, a foretaste of the next distillery to open downtown.

Seems like there's a James Beard chef on every corner, but they're not the only local heroes Louisville boasts. There's the Slugger Museum (batter up!) and one devoted to hometown slugger, Muhammad Ali. Another homeboy gets his due in the town cemetery, where a yellow line on the pavement leads to the grave of its patron saint, KFC's Col. Sanders. Visit [www.gotolouisville.com](http://www.gotolouisville.com) and come hungry. ■

## GAY TIDINGS

**BARS:** Any and every. Diversity is cherished in this town. Some outstanding hangouts: **The Connection**—clearly the biggest, baddest, with performers and dancing **Tryangles:** laidback—shoot pool, grab a drink **Teddy Bear's:** intimate, for the mature crowd **Nowhere Bar:** newest on the party scene **Purrswaytions:** lesbians rule **Magnolia:** low-key and relaxing **SHOP:** 8 new boutiques favoring local artisans in SoFo, **South on Fourth:** chic menswear at **The Leading Man** and **Gifhorse.** **HOTELS:** **21C:** welcoming; annual Drag Queen Brunch in December **Vu:** by the owner of The Connection, a 4-acre compound (pool, spa) in a converted tobacco warehouse, slated to open in 2014 **EVENTS:** A Cher tour stop in June



# Putin's Follies

*We're up all night 'til the sun  
We're up all night to get some  
We're up all night for good fun  
We're up all night to get lucky.*

Nope, no gay undertones here. Especially not when sung by the Russian Gay Men's Chorus, excuse me, the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs. I must admit, in the final days leading up to the Opening Ceremony of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games, I was filled with a sense of dread and apprehension. *Something* was going to happen. I didn't know what, but I could feel it coming. There were threats of terrorism from various extremist groups, anxiety amongst GLBT athletes and fans about their welcome, and general unease as to whether Sochi was ready to host, with buildings and bathrooms incomplete and streets unpaved.

Something happened all right. The Russian Police Choir sang Daft Punk. In full military uniform.

Was it just me, or did the scene slightly resemble Captain Von Trapp singing "Edelweiss" at the end of *The Sound of Music*? You know, onstage at the Salzburg Music Festival while the Nazis waited for him, right before escaping with his family to Switzerland? Of course you do, I know my audience.

The men sure looked nervous, and I don't blame them. One wrong flick of the wrist, one sinful hip swivel, and they might have been whisked offstage. I'm surprised they didn't promptly all arrest each other for violating the Gay Propaganda Law. Weirdo mustached man, at least, was definitely looking to get violated. Seriously. You-Tube it.

Next up, Swan Lake. Sochi Mayor Anatoly Pakhomov had insisted that Sochi had no gay people. Um, I just found them all.

The headlines screamed "Sorry Vlad, That Was the Gayest Opening Ceremony Ever," (Slate Magazine) and "Putin's Way-Gay Opening Ceremony" (Daily Beast). Then, the world let out a collective sigh of relief, and the Games were underway as normal. As normal as could be, anyway, with animal activist groups descending upon the

city to gather up and save all the stray dogs the Russian government had begun to euthanize. (As far as I could tell, this angered the GLBT community as much, if not more than oppressing the gays. Nothing gets lesbians riled up faster than hurting puppies.)

Minnesotan Olympians have been successful in making their presence known in numerous events, including hockey, curling, and skiing. USA women's hockey boasts five current or former Gophers, including current NCAA Player of the Year Amanda Kessel (whose brother Phil is a forward for the men's hockey team) and as of press time has defeated Finland and Switzerland, which pits them off against long-time rival and defending gold medal winner Canada.

Seven out gay athletes are competing in Sochi as well, all of whom are women. Ahem. Looking at you, men's figure skating. Thankfully, former Olympian Johnny Weir remains true to self, attracting attention wearing a new fabulous and flamboyant outfit each day while serving as an analyst and commentator. Ireen Wüst, a speedskater from the Netherlands became the first out athlete to medal, winning Gold in the 3000 meters.

The Games will be wrapping up by the time this column hits the stands, and, knock on wood, the worries of a scary "something" happening never materialized. Unless, of course, you're Bob Costas. Whatever is going on in his eyeballs is pretty scary. To small children watching television. Go home, Bob. You're drunk.

As the games continue, the rest of the world has moved on to newer stories, including that of a star college football player predicted to be drafted high in May's NFL draft who shocked the sporting world by announcing he is gay. More on the impact of his decision to football and the GLBT community in the next issue. In the meantime, I'll continue watching Putin's Totally Not Gay Olympics, and hope that the Americans and the lezzies continue to "Get Lucky." ■



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BAR & CLUBS | BAROMETER | BY GEORGE HOLDGRAFER

# Gay 90's Trans Exotica Celebrates One-Year Anniversary

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Trans Exotica, a weekly event every Wednesday, 9 PM-2 AM, in the Men's Room bar downstairs at the Gay 90's in Downtown Minneapolis, celebrates its one-year anniversary in March. It's open to all ages 18 and up.

According to director Brandonna Dupri LaReese, who is also the bartender for the evening, Trans Exotica is "the only trans girl exotic dancer night in the Twin Cities"—and indeed nationwide. She notes that the "Rated X" event is "where fantasy and fetish become reality." It stars La Reese, Christina, Monica, Rere, and Vanessa.

As LaReese points out, "It's all about the trans community in the Twin Cities. We wanted to provide a place for all trans people and friends to feel welcome and socialize in a fun space."

LaReese is also show director of Eggs 'n' Drag, a brunch and drag show Sundays at the Gay 90's downstairs. Marking its first anniversary in May, the event now takes place weekly on Sundays, 11 AM-2 PM. ■

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(From left) Trans Exotica stars Vanessa, Brandonna Dupri LaReese, Rere, Christina, and Monica. Photo by George Holdgrafer

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- Quorum is the Twin Cities GLBT & Allied Chamber of Commerce.
- Quorum champions the business case for a fully inclusive community as a conduit for economic development and a leader in the continuum of change.
- Quorum is an affiliate of the NGLCC (National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce) in D.C. Through the NGLCC, Quorum helps local small businesses to obtain their LGBTE certification.
- Quorum partners with corporate members to plan and host quarterly workplace alliance events with the local corporate LGBTA ERGs (Employee Resource Groups).

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Typically held the fourth Tuesday of each month at one of our member establishments. This monthly event provides a casual atmosphere to help build your network and connect and share with other professionals as well as increase our presence in the greater LGBTA business community.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 ➔

QUORUM

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## THE BOESER-HUTTON GLOBETROTTERS

"Home is where the heart is." Most people have experienced this familiar adage to some extent, but the phrase holds added significance to Minnesota-born Shawn Boeser, Australian-born Josephine Hutton, and their two young children, Emmeline and Elias. With both women employed as international humanitarians, this family has trekked the globe and experienced the challenges and joys of same-sex parenting in multiple countries. Here's a look at how this Lavender family keeps their ties strong—even from thousands of miles away.

In 2003, Shawn and Jo found themselves in Basra, Iraq; Shawn was employed through the United Nations, and Jo was working with the International Organization for Migration. Shawn was supposed to be celebrating her birthday, but the late arrival of colleagues left her waiting and listening to a horrible rendition of "Hotel California." Jo noticed the cranky woman sitting in the hotel, but their first conversation didn't occur until tragedy struck on August 19, 2003. The UN headquarters in Baghdad was bombed by a suicide bomber, and all UN-affiliated people were evacuated to Amman, Jordan. The women met in the hotel where they were housed, and something clicked. In the short time they were both in Jordan, they realized they had a pretty special connection. Jo notes, "I like to say that our love was the one good thing to come out of the war in Iraq, and in an unlikely place to sow the seeds of our union."

Shortly after meeting, Shawn returned to the United States and Jo stayed in the

Middle East. The women kept in contact through the internet and planned to meet up in Amsterdam in November 2003. The week-long visit solidified the couple's investment in their shared future, and they became a couple. When Shawn was placed in Liberia, she asked Jo to consider joining her. Jo recalls that she initially laughed it off; "it was not like being asked to go to Paris, but her point was that we needed to be living in the same place to see if we had a future together." Jo switched jobs and joined Shawn in Liberia in 2004. She notes, "It was clear from early on in our relationship that we were amazingly compatible with our values and ethics, our politics and passions, and our views about life."

As the women planned their future together, they realized that having children while remaining globe-trotters would come with many challenges. Shawn and Jo moved to Seattle to start creating their family, and they joined a "Maybe Baby" support group to get information and support. Initial attempts to impregnate Jo using sperm from a sperm bank were unsuccessful, so the couple moved to Bangkok for Jo's new job with Oxfam Great Britain. Not wanting to put their dreams of a family on hold, Shawn and Jo attempted to use the resources of multiple fertility clinics to no avail. Shawn says, "They rejected us. They found it unethical to inseminate a 'single' woman and did not recognize us as a couple. We found this frustrating as one could get gender reassignment surgery there but could not get pregnant. We couldn't do home insemination using imported

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38 ➔



# Children & Family

sperm as we had no authority to receive it!" Undeterred by the closed doors, they found another way—a private fertility clinic that was willing to ship sperm from an American sperm bank to Thailand and continue the insemination process.

After one miscarriage and five unsuccessful insemination attempts, Jo finally became pregnant in April 2008. Though Shawn's work took her to Myanmar for most of Jo's pregnancy, Shawn made it a point to get back for all the milestone doctor's appointments. Due to laws that would allow Shawn to be listed as a parent on the birth certificate, the couple moved to Australia for the birth of their daughter, Emmeline. Described as being "fashionably late," Emmeline was born on January 4 in 2009. Shortly after the birth of their first child, Shawn and Jo decided to try again, and Elias was born in 2010 in Melbourne.

As with many GLBT couples, the road to building a family was not quick or easy for Shawn and Jo. Jo notes, "It was quite a process and not for the faint-hearted, but we managed just fine and feel fortunate." She adds that many of their most difficult moments in the process were pretty unique. "In some ways, the hardest stuff was agreeing on the type of donor we wanted—we workshoped that for a while—and then once we decided to go with a sperm bank, it was quite a process to choose a donor. It was also tricky timing all the inseminations with my travel schedule throughout Asia. Emmeline visited nine countries whilst still in the womb!"

Having two mothers who travel the world truly has its benefits; both Emmeline and Elias have traveled more than most people ever do in their lives! When the family was in Bangkok, Shawn and Jo took their children into the fertility clinic where they were created so the children could meet the people who helped with their

creation. They also were able to spend time in Australia as well as the United States, providing them with a truly global life experience. The women also decided that, no matter where their work takes them, they wouldn't spend more than six weeks apart. With two young kids, it's tough to be away. Thankfully, modern technology allows the family to keep in touch and share special moments from thousands of miles away.

Traveling as a GLBT family definitely has its downside, especially regarding issues of citizenship and residency. Shawn and Jo can describe the complicated legalities of immigration, gaining visas, and achieving legal recognition in their multiple "homes" around the world. These legal processes are time-consuming, expensive, and sometimes not even successful. The couple also has to consider many factors when choosing potential jobs around the world; most importantly is a thorough evaluation of whether being queer in their new locations will end in violence or even jail-time. Though the repeal of DOMA lifted many restrictions overnight, there is still a lot of progress to be made in the realm of legal protection and equality for GLBT people around the world.

In addition to traveling, the Boeser-Hutton family enjoys the outdoors (in whatever country they happen to be in!), and they love to spend time with their family and friends around the world. Jo and Shawn agree, "We are a global family. We live outside the box. We don't let too many things get in the way of following our dreams." At the time of this publication, Jo and the children are preparing to meet Shawn in Manila, where Shawn is continuing her humanitarian work with the United Nations. Wherever their dreams take them, their love for each other will make them feel right at home. ■

1. Shawn, Jo, Emmeline, and Elias explore the great outdoors in Sedona (2011).

2. The Boeser-Hutton family enjoys nature walks in every country they visit.

3. Shawn, Jo, and Emmeline welcomed Elias into the family in 2010.

4. Like many GLBT parents, Shawn and Jo invested a great deal of time and financial resources to make their family dreams come true.

5. Emmeline and Elias enjoy some sibling bonding time in a pool in Sedona (2011).





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# Children & Family

# RAINBOW RESO

## 1. *The Family Heart: A Memoir of When Our Son Came Out* by Robb Forman Dew \$13.99

Many books available for parents concerning their child's announcement of his or her homosexuality are cast as "self-help" or educational. In the absence of informed, nonjudgmental material, these books are important, but personal stories should also be brought to the table. In *Family Heart: A Memoir of When Our Son Came Out*, novelist Robb Forman Dew tells the story of what happen to her (and her family) after her son, Stephen, came out. What sets Dew's story apart is that the moral weight is not upon Stephen to deal with the confused reactions of his parents, but upon the parents to deal with their own mixed emotions and the negative reactions of their friends.

## 2. *Mommy, Momma, and Me* by Lesléa Newman (Author) and Carol Thompson (Illustrator) \$7.99

Reports have always said that it's important for children to see images of themselves in books, movies, and in their toys. This children's book depicts the nurturing relationship of a lesbian couple and their little one. Also, see this book's gay-fathers counterpart, *Daddy, Papa, and Me*, by the same creators.

## 3. *And Then There Was Me* by Gloria Finkbeiner \$39.99

Created especially for gay, lesbian and single parent families celebrating the birth of a child, this baby book uses gender-neutral language throughout. Containing all of the pages you would expect to find in a traditional baby book, Finkbeiner's creation includes special bonuses like a single parent family tree, sperm or egg donor information and more!

## 4. *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* by Jacqueline Woodson \$19.99

Melanin is a boy whose life is turned upside down when his mother reveals that she has fallen in love with another woman. This book is praised for not only being well written and sending a message about being gay, it also raises issues of race, as both Melanin and his mother are African American, and his mother's new lover is white.

## 5. *It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living* edited by Dan Savage and Terry Miller \$25.00

What became a YouTube movement also became a book. As a collection of essays and material from celebrities as well as everyday people, Savage's book shows GLBT youth the levels of happiness, potential and positivity their lives will reach if they can just get through their teen years. By sharing these stories, *It Gets Better* reminds teenagers in the GLBT community that they are not alone – and it WILL get better.

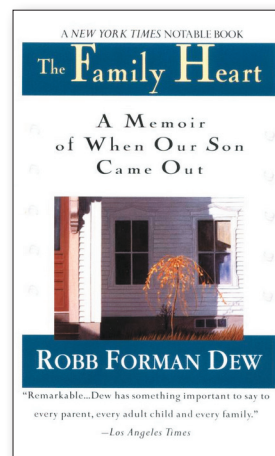
## 6. *Boy Meets Boy* by David Levithan \$8.99

Heralded as a will-be classic of gay literature and set in a gay-friendly "utopia," Levithan's novel describes a few weeks in the lives of a group of high school students. As the title suggests, the central story follows the standard romantic plotline usually known as "boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl" except that the main characters are both boys, the narrator Paul and newcomer Noah. The novel won a Lambda Literary Award, which honors published works that celebrate or explore GLBT themes.

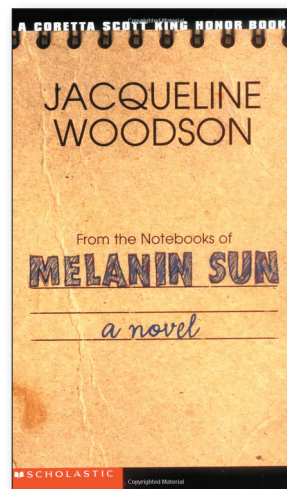
## 7. *Parrotfish* by Ellen Wittlinger \$14.99

Angela Katz-McNair has never felt quite right as a girl, but when she cuts her hair, buys men's clothing, and announces her preferred name (Grady), it comes as a shock to those around her. Although Grady is happy about his decision to finally be true to himself, everybody else is having trouble processing the news. On top of that, there are more practical concerns—for instance, which locker room is he supposed to use for gym class? But as the victim of some cruel jokes, Grady also finds unexpected allies, including the school geek, Sebastian, and Kita, a gorgeous senior. Wittlinger explores Grady's struggles with both humor and sadness.

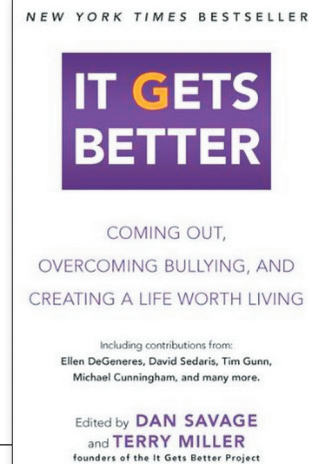
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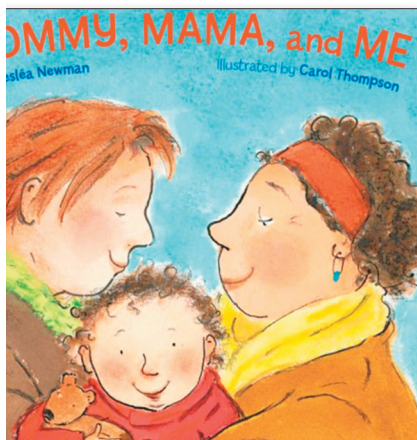
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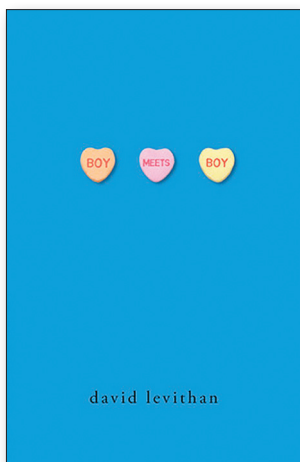


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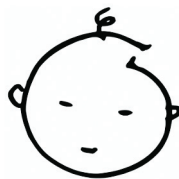
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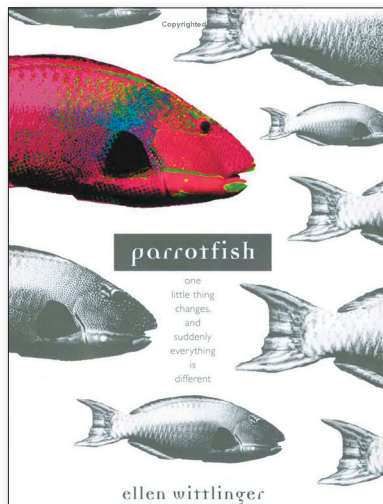


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## RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

### RAINBOW RUMPUS

[www.rainbowrumpus.org](http://www.rainbowrumpus.org)

Rainbow Rumpus, an online collection of literature for children and youth with GLBT parents, was conceived in 2005 when publisher Laura Matanah's daughter pointed out a picture of same-sex parents and exclaimed, "Look Mommy! Two moms and twins! Just like us!"

Rainbow Rumpus provides a safe and empowering place for young people to create and enjoy art, break through isolation, build community, and take action to make the world a better place. Producing over 25 new stories each year along with articles, essays, music and video, Rainbow Rumpus is a prolific publisher of fiction about GLBT-headed families and displays work created by both young people and professional artists.

Rainbow Rumpus won a Dot.Org award for "Awesome Audience Awareness" from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits in 2007. In 2010 Rainbow Rumpus updated its technology and launched a new sister site for teens, Rainbow Riot ([www.rainbowriot.org](http://www.rainbowriot.org)).

## EVENT HIGHLIGHT

### OUTFRONT MINNESOTA YOUTH SUMMIT

March 3, 2014

8:00 am – 5:00 pm

[www.outfront.org/youthsummit](http://www.outfront.org/youthsummit)

High school students (grades 9-12) are invited to this daylong event sponsored by OutFront Minnesota. The morning session, held at Metropolitan State University in Saint Paul, will feature a plenary and workshops on topics including bullying prevention, racial equity, addressing stereotypes, mental health, spoken word, and advocating for change in your school. Student attendees will learn how to make their schools safer, more inclusive and empowering for all.

Participants will then be bused to the Capitol in the afternoon for the student-led Rally in the Rotunda at 1:30 pm. Community members who support the Safe & Supportive Minnesota Schools Act are encouraged to join the rally. Participants can also learn more about the bill and grassroots lobbying. After that, participants can visit legislators to talk about the need to protect students and pass this bill from 2:30 to 4:30.

The cost of attendance (\$15) includes lunch, a T-shirt and bus from Metro State to the Capitol and back. Scholarships are available if needed.



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### BIGGAYNEWS FROM MISSOURI:

#### **NFL Prospect Michael Sam Proudly Says What Teammates Knew: He's Gay**

*The New York Times* reports that the defensive lineman from the University of Missouri spoke publicly about his sexual orientation and could become the first openly gay player in the National Football League. Michael Sam revealed his sexuality to teammates and coaches during a team building exercise at preseason practice last year, and his supportive and accepting team kept his secret throughout the year until Sam decided to open up publicly on Sunday in an interview. Sam is considered to be a third-to-fifth round draft choice in the NFL draft in May, which would make him the first openly gay active player in any of the major league sports leagues.

### BIGGAYNEWS FROM THE UNITED STATES:

#### **Coke Features First Gay Family To Appear In A Super Bowl Ad**

The Today Show's Money webpage reports that in the second quarter of the Super Bowl, Coke became the first advertiser to show a gay family in an ad for America's big game. The advertisement, which featured a variety of different families, individuals and ethnicities set to "America the Beautiful", included the two male partners roller-skating with their daughter. GLAAD President and CEO Sarah Kate Ellis applauded the ad, stating: "Coca-Cola has demonstrated to corporate America that being GLBT-inclusive is good for business, but as the world turns its attention to Sochi for the 2014 Winter Olympics, it's time for sponsors of the Olympics like Coca-Cola to show the whole world how beautiful GLBT families are."

### BIGGAYNEWS FROM MINNESOTA:

#### **Centennial Student Gets Death Threat After Coming Out On Facebook**

MyFox9.com reports that six weeks ago, a Centennial high school student came out (or 'invited in') in a video, and on Tuesday, he found an anonymous threatening letter in his English class that's prompting a police investigation. Ryan Eichenauer, a senior at the Circle Pines, Minnesota high school, finally decided to come out to his family and classmates, but said that he had no idea of the hatred and vehemence that would follow his revelation. Eichenauer said that the second note that he received stated, in part: "I can't wait for the day that I get to walk over your grave and if you don't put yourself there, I will be glad to, Just do us all a favor and do it soon. Kill yourself already."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44 ➔



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**BIGGAYNEWS FROM MARYLAND:**

**Pascal Tessier, Gay Maryland Teen, Achieved Eagle Scout Milestone**

The *Huffington Post* reports that change is coming quickly to the Boy Scouts of America. The 17-year-old Tessier achieved the highest rank in the scouting organization after over a year of speaking out to end the ban on gays in the Boy Scouts of America. Scouts for Equality, an advocacy group, say that Tessier is likely the first openly gay scout to attain the rank of Eagle.

**BIGGAYNEWS FROM MINNESOTA:**

**College Football Linebacker Was Openly Gay And Embraced By His Teammates**

*OutSports* reports that Scott Cooper just finished his senior season, and found true acceptance on his Augsburg College football team, which included him being asked by a coach to speak on National Coming Out Day and introducing his partner at Senior Day. Cooper recalls being introduced as "Senior Linebacker Scott Cooper" and "his partner, Dan" as the two of them walked onto the field together to applause from the crowd, coaches and fellow players. The athlete says that when his teammates learned of his sexuality, their use of the words 'fag' and 'queer' dropped off significantly as they became more sensitive to how those words can be hurtful and demeaning, especially to those still in the closet and struggling with coming out and being themselves in a world that is not entirely accepting.

**BIGGAYNEWS FROM SCOTLAND:**

**Scotland's Parliament Legalizes Gay Marriage**

*The Wire* reports that the Scottish Parliament overwhelmingly passed a bill on Tuesday that will legalize gay marriage in the country. In a 105 to 18 vote, Scotland became the 17<sup>th</sup> country in the world to legalize gay marriage, and the third part of the United Kingdom to do so after England and Wales legalized same-sex marriage last summer. The bill passed in spite of opposition by both the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Catholic Church. Scotland had previously recognized same-sex civil unions, and those couples who were in civil partnerships will be able to convert their unions into marriages as soon as the law goes into effect, possibly in October.

**BIGGAYNEWS FROM FINLAND:**

**Finnish Olympic Swimmer Ari-Pekka Liukkonen Comes Out As Gay**

Advocate.com reports that in an effort to raise awareness of Russia's anti-gay legislation ahead of the Sochi Winter Games, Finnish Olympic swimmer Ari-Pekka Liukkonen has come out as gay. The bronze medalist in the 2012 European Championships is the first Finnish athlete to come out while still active in his career. Currently in training for the 2016 Rio Olympics, Liukkonen would like to see GLBT acceptance in his home country become more commonplace, and hopes that his revelation will help to start more conversation in that direction.

**BIGGAYNEWS FROM SENEGAL:**

**Senegal Police Arrest Four Over Anti-Gay Violence**

ABC News reports that police in a city outside Senegal's capital have arrested four young men accused of carrying out attacks in a bid to rid their neighborhood of gay people. According to Mamadou Faye, an official with the police department of the city of Rufisque, the men were accused of targeting five gay men, injuring some as well as destroying property. Homosexual acts are punishable by up to five years in the African nation, and anti-gay sentiment is rampant. ■





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# THE [CURB] APPEAL OF JOHN GIDDING

BY SHANE LUECK

**T**he path to one's dream career isn't always straightforward. There are often loops and turns and if a line was drawn along the career path, it would more often resemble a scribbled mess than a straight line. John Gidding, of HGTV fame, followed a similarly scrambled career trajectory.

During his time in graduate school, Gidding was not only involved in a cappella choirs and glee clubs, but also spent his time on the runway. With names like Armani, Gucci, and Hugo Boss sending him down the catwalk, a future in modeling seemed like a lucrative op-

portunity, but not for Gidding. "I did it to help with the bills after grad school," he says. "I got the degree to work, not to model. I wasn't a top model, anyway. I had a good time with it, but it wasn't for me and it can be a detrimental career, too."

An industry fraught with harsh critiques of appearances and personal lives placed Gidding in an uncomfortable position. "At the time, I was coming out of the closet and was just coming into my own skin so I decided to get out."

And out he got, but not before bringing a face to romantic fantasies. Aside from runway work, Gidding did a stint as the face of





John Gidding. Photo by Josh Thomas Photography



romance novel heroes. “Newly arriving models are kind of funneled into that,” Gidding explains. “There’s a lot of need for fresh covers since the romance novel industry is pumping out books every couple months. After a couple months those books aren’t on the shelves anymore and it’s time for new ones.”

Joking that he gave out copies of the books as Christmas cards, Gidding recalls his first cover, *The Rake’s Revenge*, as his favorite, but his favorite title belongs to *Bedding His Virgin Mistress*. “The best part is you walk in and they put you in costume and give you the whole backstory, so we’d act out the scene.”

Transitioning to television, according to Gidding, was just an extension of his modeling. Sent on a casting for what he thought was a commercial, it ended up being for a television show being developed. The soon-to-be pop culture phenomenon *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* was looking for its cast, but Gidding passed on the show. “When they first brought it up to me, I was just coming out of the closet,” he says. “When I heard it was a gay-centric TV show it wasn’t what I was looking for. It wasn’t going to be a good fit for me.”

The producers saw something in Gidding and didn’t give up. The same production company was creating a show for ABC Family. *Knock First*, Gidding’s first television gig, centered on room makeovers for teenagers, an audience that Gidding says isn’t too different than adults. He says, “Teenagers have a very developed sense of identity – designing for them, it was important for us to understand them as adults or developing adults.”

After two seasons, Gidding went on to be involved with HGTV’s *Designed to Sell* and *Curb Appeal: The Block*. An experience which Gidding says was very different from ABC Family. “At the time, 10 years ago now, ABC was making a foray into kids design and the rules weren’t set,” he says. “Working with HGTV, a tried and true network, they know exactly what they want. It’s based in Nashville so there isn’t the New York/L.A. entertainment hub atmosphere. It really has a family vibe.” And family it is! Gidding doesn’t feel competitive with his HGTV counterparts. “Although maybe just under the surface it really is competitive,” he jokes before explaining that the other show hosts really like each other, “partying it up” whenever they get together.

But the biggest difference, Gidding says, is designing for outdoor spaces instead of indoor. “The more interior you get the more personal it can be, whereas outdoor design (especially landscapes) is about the personality of the neighborhood,” he says. “It’s not about trends or anything, but really about function and form. There will be some trends but these things are much more slow moving than indoor design.”

Having worked on such large projects as Union Square in New York, the campus plan for Carnegie Mellon University, and a pavilion for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, Gidding favors his transition to

working with homeowners. Although large, public projects allow Gidding to put his fingerprint on the world, that work was always under someone else’s name. Now, having created his own company (John Gidding Design, Inc.) his work is a personal reflection.

“Those things were seminal in my development but it’s been a while now,” he says. “But six straight seasons of *Curb Appeal* with thirteen episodes per season – that’s a lot of homes. Imagine getting to work on one house after another and studying their architecture and being tasked to improve the designs. It was like a laboratory for me: I got to really learn a lot from it and it has replaced those projects in being influential in my career.”

While embracing the architecture of the home and working with what is already there, Gidding is faced with the task of marrying the pre-existing structure with his own aesthetic. Growing up in Istanbul, Turkey, Gidding believes that culture has impacted his design aesthetic. “When people ask what my style is I say I’m a modernist. But I tend to gravitate to more decor and ornamentation than most modernists do. Last time I was in Turkey I was out getting all of these knick knacks and little design pieces to use on a project I was working on. I looked around at the things I bought and here I was surrounded by all of these bright fabrics and things and thinking, ‘This isn’t very modernist!’ I find that the juxtaposition between those things is what makes design interesting.”

With so much time spent in front of the camera, Gidding has never worried about his identifying as an openly gay man being detrimental to his design career. The design world, Gidding points out, isn’t very homophobic. “I’m a designer and an architect. I get a free pass in that regard and for all of the wrong reasons,” he says. “It’s a big stereotype that needs to be dealt with.”

In fact, Gidding credits his success to the support he’s received in the United States as opposed to Turkey where there isn’t as much support for GLBT individuals. “When I started in TV they asked if I would prefer to be open and I said absolutely,” he explains. “I tend to take a positive view on all of this. I’m an optimist. I think all of the opportunities that have been afforded to me have been because I’m comfortable in my own skin.”

Gidding never has to deal with the occasional degrading comments on his Facebook page. He is fond of the two dozen fans who will immediately jump in and support him, putting the naysayer in their place. “We clearly haven’t won all of the battles we need to, but the response has been great on TV, on HGTV, and in the public in general.” ■

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*Gidding will be appearing at the Minneapolis Home + Garden Show, which runs from February 26 through March 2. Taking the stage the first two days of the Home + Garden Show, Gidding will be speaking about his design process, architectural features, and how DIY-ers can incorporate design into their own homes. Head to [www.homeandgardenshow.com](http://www.homeandgardenshow.com) for more information.*

*With so much time spent in front of the camera, Gidding has never worried about his identifying as an openly gay man being detrimental to his design career. The design world, Gidding points out, isn’t very homophobic.*



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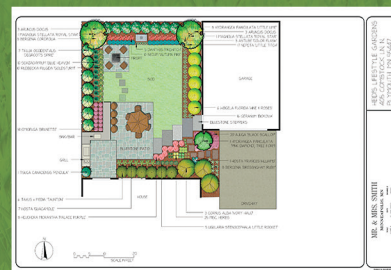
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“Economically, it’s probably better to just restyle it, revamp it, and redo it.”

# OMFORME

BY SHANE LUECK

Omforme, Norwegian for “To Transform,” is a perfectly suitable name for Carter Averbeck’s recently launched design store. And “transform” is exactly what he manages to do with previously owned furnishings, taking each piece and restyling it with a modern twist, ready to settle back into your home as functional works of art.

Averbeck, who is half Norwegian in heritage, is passionate about refurbishing old furniture into something new and beautiful. “I see all of the excess that just gets thrown out. All of it’s beautiful, it’s just that as far as the public is concerned, they don’t realize how much is thrown out,” says Averbeck. “So I figure if I could take these beautiful pieces and transform them into something gorgeous, and keep them out of the landfill, then that’s great.”

The problem, Averbeck says, is that consumers always think in terms of new, making his challenge to create something that looks new and exciting in their eyes. He is critical of the common mindset that setting something by the garbage magically makes it disappear, when in reality it goes somewhere as landfill.

“Economically, it’s probably better to just restyle it, revamp it, and redo it,” Averbeck says. “So there is a whole paradigm shift in that way of ‘If I’m buying something new for my house let’s make sure it’s something that’s restyled, where I’m saving it from the landfill’ instead of buying brand new. We just don’t have the resources.”

Averbeck, who does his own design work, also partners with other artists in multiple capacities. First, Omforme serves as a showcase of new items made by artisans, designers, and craftsmen from salvaged and reclaimed materials. In addition, Averbeck will work with charitable organizations to transform a piece and, when it sells, donations go back to the organizations. These partnerships, Averbeck says, are easy-going in nature and keep an open format. His partnerships are with people whom, he claims, demonstrate a sense of urban chic, trend, and think outside of the box. This ensures that what customers find at Omforme isn’t available at any other boutique; they’re usually one-offs for very limited runs.

With the recent surge of the DIY mentality, Averbeck is quick to mention that some things may require the help of a professional. Not everything looks good as a shabby chic piece of furniture, he says, citing two reasons that set him apart from the average DIY homeowner.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52 ➔



"I have a long history of how to refinish things. I also have an editing eye for what a piece can turn into. I grew up doing it. My family did it. That whole idea of 'making a silk purse from a sow's ear' is pretty exciting for me. We grew up rehabbing houses, turning ugly houses into beautiful houses, and so this just kind of goes along with all of that."

Although in-store products will include everything from sculptures to chairs and from tables to lamps, Omforme's services go beyond the pieces you'll see when entering the Uptown store. Averbeck will do package deals for design consultation on everything from a simple color consultation and room planning to "full-on design services." Custom redesign of individual pieces is also a common occurrence.

"People are beginning to realize that a chair they had up in their attic or in the basement can now be redone," Averbeck says. "And a lot of them are heirloom pieces that they got from family members, and they don't want to get rid of it because of the nostalgic value. Bringing them here is a way of transforming them into the taste that they have now, today, instead of them sitting in a basement."

Averbeck, whose design work can be seen in restaurants, hotels, and boutiques all over downtown Minneapolis, subscribes to the philosophy of "Go bold or go home." To him, this means being unafraid in your design choices. "Painting your room red – it isn't going to bite you when you go to sleep at night," he says. "And if it's your favorite color, you've got one life, paint your room red. Don't be afraid of putting color into your house at all; it will do nothing but enhance who you are."

It's this design aesthetic and passion for repurposing that landed Averbeck a slot at the American Craft Council Show. Held at the St. Paul RiverCentre, the show is a three-day celebration of hand-made design, featuring artists designing jewelry, clothing, furniture, and home décor. Being invited to participate in the show isn't something Averbeck takes lightly. "It's just an absolute great honor," he says. "They ask very well-known people to be a part of it and, since I'm fairly new in the world of people knowing who I am as Omforme, it's a big honor to be a part of it." ■

#### Omforme

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**1. Fiberglass Astronaut Sculpture** by Christina Ridolfi, adjunct professor at MCAD. **2. Mr. Tweedlebaum**, Averbeck's good luck charm. **3. "Gas Punk" Lamp** by Bill Powers. **4. "Live Edged Table"** in black walnut by Nick Thompson. **5. Camouflage chair** by Carter Averbeck. **6. Commissioned, custom chair** by Carter Averbeck.



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# DÉCOR FOR ENTERTAINING, ORIGINAL CHARMS, AND MINNESOTA MICRO-BREWED BEER

Whether you've attended American Craft Council shows for years or this year's show is your first: The 2014 show has something for everyone

BY LYNN NELSON, PAMELA DIAMOND, AND GRACE AGBOR

Every April, Midwestern followers of the American craft art movement look forward to the American Craft Council (ACC) show at the St. Paul RiverCentre, where more than 225 of the top artists from throughout the country gather to share their wares with more than 10,000 visitors. Although this year's show is two weeks earlier than usual, it promises to be stronger than ever, with two new exhibitions and a craft beer-tasting room that features the work of a local interior designer and craft artist.

Whether you have followed this show for the more than 20 years that it's been in the Twin Cities, or this year will be your first show, the 2014 show will delight you with new and established artists from around the country and experienced and emerging interior designers from the Twin Cities. "One of the most exciting aspects of this year's show is that the older and younger creative people are coming together in ways they haven't before," says ACC Marketing Director Pamela Diamond.

"Emerging artists and designers are excited to discover the long-standing traditions that are represented by ACC artists, and ACC artists are inspired by some of the emerging themes that new designers and artists bring to the party." As artists throughout the country know, getting into an ACC show isn't easy. It is more strictly juried than almost any art show or festival in the Midwest. The ACC sponsors equally elite shows in Baltimore, Atlanta and San Francisco.

## What is 'Craft'?

"What is Craft" is a question that has that has prompted years of dialogue and debate. Some view Craft as an art, others as a hobby



This vignette, also exhibited at the ACC show, incorporates a Karen Gubitz fiber sculpture, David Bryce man sculpture, Joel Nichols wood recliner, and Lynda Ladwig bowls into a bold and sophisticated burst of color. Shown left to right are: Linda Engler (ASID), Courtney Johnson, and Emily Thull (ASID) of Engler Studio Interior Design. Website: [www.englerstudio.com](http://www.englerstudio.com). Photo by Steve Henke

and everything in between. It's a term that is experiencing a renaissance, and is used somewhat ubiquitously today to refer to things made by hand, ranging from bicycles to French fries, and from pizza to beer.

Editor-in-chief of *American Craft* magazine, Monica Moses, says "the lines between art and craft are blurry, but one distinction is that craft has always had a legacy of functionality, and the mastery of material tends to be more central to craft than it is to art." She offers another distinction between the two saying, "most craft is three-dimensional, while *art* is often two. While no one has the de-

finite answers to the question 'What is craft?', what we tend to focus on in our magazine and at our shows is work that is dimensional, that wants to be seen and begs to be touched. It calls out to the hand. And that's true for both the viewer and the maker."

## What is ACC?

The American Craft Council, a national nonprofit educational organization, has been shaping the artisanal craft movement for decades. In 2010, after residing in New York City for 70 years, the ACC decided to move its national headquarters to the Twin Cities, citing the area's strong arts and philanthropic culture as the ideal environment to assure Craft's relevance for years to come.

Serving as a craft chronicler, tastemaker, convener, and provocateur through its award-winning bimonthly magazine *American Craft*, annual juried shows presenting artists and their work, thought leadership conferences, awards for excellence, research library, work-



shops, and seminars, the ACC is about to celebrate its 28<sup>th</sup> show in St. Paul at St. Paul RiverCentre April 10-13. For additional information, visit [www.craftcouncil.org](http://www.craftcouncil.org) or follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/CraftCouncil](https://facebook.com/CraftCouncil) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/craftcouncil](https://twitter.com/craftcouncil).

#### What can you expect at this year's show?

The American Craft Council (ACC) Show will feature more than 225 of the country's top contemporary craft artists presenting their latest hand-made creations in jewelry, clothing, furniture, and home décor. This year, show-goers will enjoy two new onsite exhibitions: "Make Room, Modern Design Meets Craft – Let's Entertain and American Craft™" the new ACC Charm Collection, and a craft beer taproom.

"Now in its second year, we've added a new theme to our Make Room collaboration," says Diamond. "The new theme, 'Let's Entertain', puts craft into context by featuring room vignettes designed by local interior designers who have been inspired by objects of fine craft that are ideally suited for entertaining. From serving pieces to furniture, light fixtures to textiles, sculptures to decorative accessories, the possibilities are endless when it comes to the items a fine craft artist contributes to making a space feel warm and welcoming."

Interior designer firms in "Make Room—Let's Entertain" include: Andrew Martin International, Edina; Desi Interior Design, Minneapolis; Engler Studio Interior Design, Edina; FindFurnish, Northeast Minneapolis; Forage Modern Workshop, South Minneapolis; Indicia Interior Design, St. Paul; KSID Studio, Minneapolis; Laura Engen Interior Design, Minneapolis; Omforme Design, Minneapolis; and Wheaton Hushcha Design, Minneapolis.

Desi Creswell of Desi Interior Design in Minneapolis describes her Make Room vignette this way: "My room is inspired by the organic nature of the art: rustic wood edges, curvilinear lines of vases, and natural fibers of woven textile. Timeless furniture with black accents grounds the space while an ombre plaster finish provides a striking backdrop for the art to shine. Most importantly, the space creates a comfortable, inviting environment that encourages one to linger."

In contrast to Creswell's neutral approach, Linda Engler of Engler Studio Interior Design in Edina says her inspiration resulted in "a bold, sophisticated mix of color, materials, contrasts, and eras – crafted and machined, raw and refined, light and dark, textural and sleek, vintage and modern – the sum of which we hope accomplishes our goal of an inspired and memorable vignette designed to cause passersby to stop and stare."

The second new exhibition, the American Craft Charm Collection, features an exclusive hand-made assortment of charms, charm bracelets, cluster pendants, and pins designed by several of the American Craft Council's extraordinary jewelry artists. The collections will represent a broad



This vignette will be exhibited with nine others at the ACC show. Interior designer Desi Creswell chose to incorporate a black and white stars shawl by Muffy Young, Wood sculpture by Jim Keller, and Man Ho Cho ceramic sculpture into this inviting vignette. Website: [www.desiid.com](http://www.desiid.com). Photo by Steve Henke

range of aesthetics, price points, and materials, including alternative, semi-precious, and precious. Each artist's collection will be on display in a special pop-up exhibition space on the show floor.

#### Try nine Minnesota Craft beers

Also, new to the St. Paul show this year is a craft beer taproom, where the Twin Cities' own Beer Dabbler, an organization focused on promoting the culture of craft beer, will host daily tastings from a selection of nine offerings from area microbreweries. The taproom will be designed by local design-and-build company, Brownsmith Restoration, and will feature handcrafted bar tops designed by ACC show artist Willie Willette of Willie Willette Works. Beer tastings will be offered throughout the show from these Minnesota Microbreweries: Indeed Brewing Company, Fulton Beer, Dangerous Man Brewing Company, Hayes Public House, Fitger's Brewhouse, Sociable Cider Werks, Bang Brewing, plus Bent Paddle Brewing Company and Blacklist Brewing from Duluth.

When planning a visit to the ACC show, make sure to set aside anywhere from a few hours to a couple days, depending on how much you wish to see. And bring your walking shoes. You are sure to log anywhere from a mile to many miles visiting the 10 rooms developed by local interior designers, as well as the over 200 artists. Fortunately, there are cafeteria-style dining services available on the show floor, and you can stop for lunch – then keep on shopping.

#### SHOW DATES/TIMES:

Friday, April 11, 2014  
from 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Saturday, April 12, 2014  
from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Sunday, April 13, 2014  
from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

#### WHERE:

Saint Paul RiverCentre  
199 Kellogg Boulevard W  
St. Paul, MN 55102

#### TICKETS:

On-site Admission  
\$12 for a one-day pass  
\$28 for a three-day pass

Guests can save time by purchasing your tickets online at <http://shows.craftcouncil.org/stpaul>

Online tickets can be printed and brought right to the door.

#### ADVANCE TICKETS:

\$11 for a one-day pass  
\$26 for a three-day pass

\$5 after 5 p.m. Friday night on-site purchases only.

Entry for children 12-and-under and American Craft Council members is FREE.

#### ACC MEMBERSHIP:

The cost of membership ranges from \$40 to \$55 annually. To learn more, visit <http://craftcouncil.org/membership/join>

**INFO:** For more information about the American Craft Council Show in St. Paul, please visit <http://shows.craftcouncil.org/stpaul>

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56 ➔



# Spring Home 🌸 Garden

## ACC Wish List

### 1. Takashi Ichihara

Granby, Minn.  
Yume Studios

Website: [www.yumestudios.com](http://www.yumestudios.com)

The distinctive color and texture of this stone-fired piece creates a successful marriage of form and function that is unique and timeless. Ichihara says ancient traditions and modern movements in Japanese ceramics inspire him as he creates his own visions.

### 2. Chuck Solberg

St. Paul, Minn.

The Grand Hand Gallery

Website: [www.thegrandhand.com/artists-by-media/clay/chuck-solberg](http://www.thegrandhand.com/artists-by-media/clay/chuck-solberg)

Solberg accents the spontaneity and raw beauty of clay constructed from separately thrown clay sections. The seams and joints from this construction process are left exposed to visually break up the surface of the piece.

### 3. David Giulietti

Berkeley, Calif.

Cherry Creek Art Shop

Website: [www.cherryartshop.org/artist/david-giulietti](http://www.cherryartshop.org/artist/david-giulietti)

Bold ornamental scrollwork adorns this sterling silver ring. Hand fabricated with a 3.8 carat ruby cabochon and accent diamond set in 18-karat gold, this exquisite piece highlights the engraver's ability to take a humble piece of sheet metal and turn it into something rare and beautiful.

### 4. Ikuzi Teraki

Oakland, Calif.

Romulus Craft

Website: [www.romuluscraft.com](http://www.romuluscraft.com)

Teraki combines his lifelong association with Japanese ceramics with a powerful connection to nature. This wonderful collection lends a contemporary feel to your table with its stark contrast.

### 5. Jacob Albee

Burlington, Vermont

Jacob Albee Goldsmith

Website: [www.jacobalbee.com](http://www.jacobalbee.com)

Albee's unique melding of contrasting textures is embodied in this earthly and celestial cuff. This stunning piece of jewelry is one from which you simply cannot divert your eyes.

### 6. Lou Ann Townsend + Mary Filapek

Concord, N.C.

Mary + Lou Ann Contemporary Jewelry Design

Website: [www.maryandlouann.com](http://www.maryandlouann.com)

As part of an exclusive collection of jewelry in the ACC's new Charm program, life and business partners Townsend and Filapek have designed a collection of timeless charms, bracelet, pendant and pins attractive to a broad spectrum of jewelry collectors.

### 7. W. John Jameson III

New York City

Twisted Textiles

Website: [www.twistedtex.com](http://www.twistedtex.com)

Made with only the best wools, silks, and cashmere, Twisted Textiles produces an exquisite collection of fine hand-woven shawls and scarves. Signature design elements of the collection include dynamic color and multi-yarn texture.

### 8. Luke Proctor

Mount Horeb, Wis.

Luke Proctor Blacksmith

Website: [www.lproctorironworks.com](http://www.lproctorironworks.com)

In part inspired by the Danish Modern and Shaker style, this piece is sophisticated in its simplicity. With clean and simple lines, traditional forging techniques allow the joinery to become an aesthetic focal point of the piece.





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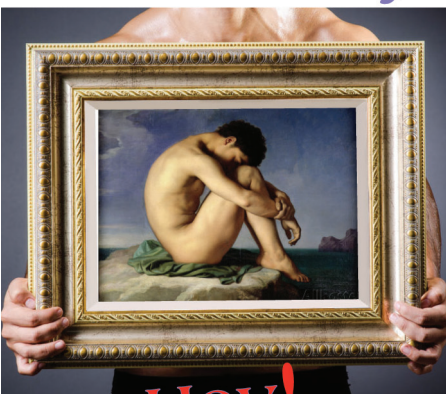
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**9. Nicole Deponte**

Providence, R.I.

Lilian Asterfield Collection

Website: [www.nicoledeponte.com](http://www.nicoledeponte.com)

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**10. Scott McGlasson**

Twin Cities, Minn.

Woodsport

Website: [www.woodsport.net](http://www.woodsport.net)

This original, heirloom-quality furniture and accessory pieces for residential, corporate, and institutional clients encompass a strong modern aesthetic and highest level of craftsmanship. Highlighting the natural materials, design influences range from mid-century modernism to industrial components to Shaker principles.

**11. Tara Locklear**

Raleigh, N.Y.

Tara Locklear

Website: [www.taralocklear.com](http://www.taralocklear.com)

Comprised of industrial and re-purposed elements, this interpretive costume jewelry integrates an iconic, mid-century, and low-brow cultural phenomena into your style.

**12. Joel Nichols**

Stillwater, Minn.

Joel Nichols Furniture

Website: [www.joelnicholsfurniture.com](http://www.joelnicholsfurniture.com)

This versatile, stunning, and functional studio furniture features new and reclaimed wood, as well as new and reclaimed metal. Nichols' goal is to present the materials in a way that highlights the life they had before they came into his possession.



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**13. Amy Arnold**

Viroqua, Wis.

Peepwool

Website: [www.peepwool.com](http://www.peepwool.com)

This one-of-a-kind sculpture with moveable parts is concocted from carved base-wood, milk-paint, and leather. Each figurative sculpture is a handcrafted creation and makes a cozy addition to the home. ■



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# The Trouble With Mittens

I'm wandering the neighborhood during a blizzard wearing only a bathrobe and boots. I'm shouting one word repeatedly into the howling wind: "Mittens!"

As I rage through the snowbanks, I am reminded of a similar scene from *King Lear*. Like Lear, I have descended into a type of madness, brought on by one of my errant children: Mittens.

Before Mittens showed up on my doorstep, loudly demanding cans of fancy albacore tuna and my unrequited love, I had given up on cats. I have tried to love many cats over the years only to be rewarded with scratch marks on my face and vengeful urine attacks against my furniture. So, I finally proclaimed myself a dog person and turned all my spinster energy on spoiling my pups.

It was great! No more dealing with cat-hair-coated clothes or that gritty after-taste that always comes in the wake of cleaning the litter box. No more cat glares that suggest both complete indifference and murderous rage. Instead, each morning I wake smothered in unapologetic and enthusiastic love attacks from my three dogs. It's so simple.

But then Mittens appeared and my life became complicated.

Last spring, I was doing yard work when I heard a plaintive wail coming from the woods next to my house. I bent down (because isn't that just like a friggin cat—to make you stoop to their level?), peered through the bushes, and spotted a black cat. He meowed loudly and repeatedly in a way that suggested he needed me.

This is how it starts. This is how clever cats are. They make you think that there might be an emotional payoff if you agree to feed and shelter them. This is how they suck you in.

So, I trotted into the house and returned with a can of tuna. As soon as I opened the can, though, he started playing hard to get. Although his nose twitched in obvious pleasure at the smell of the fish, he yawned and glanced away. Like a witless servant, I backed away apologetically and watched from a distance as he finally strolled to the tuna and wolfed it down.

This dance carried on for weeks before he finally deigned to rub against me as I was giving him his tuna. Then I was allowed to pet him. Finally, as a chill entered the air, he let me pick him up and warm him.

We had a small setback when I betrayed his trust by tossing him in the car and taking him

to the vet to be neutered and vaccinated. This did not please him! Then I confined him to the house for a day, where he stared mournfully out the window like a royal prisoner in a medieval castle, meowing angrily at his lost kingdom until I opened the door and set him free.

So, we reached a compromise. We agreed that he can prowl the neighborhood during the day, but has to come inside on cold nights. But, of course, you can't trust a cat to keep his promise. And that's why I'm out in a blizzard, worried sick, and calling his name.

I see the faces of my neighbors peeking at me from behind their curtains. They think I'm insane. I see the faces of my dogs, staring at me from my porch in confusion. Why isn't their unqualified love enough for me, they wonder?

After an hour of fruitless searching, I begin to trudge home in total despair. Then, through the gale, I hear a meow. Mitten saunters past me without a glance and settles into his perch on the porch. I'm so relieved that I weep. Mittens briefly acknowledges me with a nod, which could mean either "I love you, too" or "get me my tuna." I chose to interpret it as the former, but I fetch him some tuna anyway. ■

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# Stutter

"What you want? Ain't got all day now," says Ms. Trudy, the liver-spotted cafeteria lady. She's standing in front of Mexican pizzas that look like cheesy cardboard and pre-bunned hot dogs already covered with chili. There are tater tots and French fries at her side.

She's an intimidating grown-up. I'm a bashful nine-year-old. I have a hard time speaking—I stutter, badly—so I just point to the hot dogs to indicate my choice.

"I can't tell what you pointin' at, son. Now what you want?" She sounds mad. My face flushes with embarrassment. I take a deep breath. I hate trying to talk at school.

"I wa, wa, wa, want th, th, th..." I can't get the words out quickly enough. Travis, the blond fifth grade asshole behind me, laughs. "P... P... Poor Justin can't ta... ta... talk."

I'm angry and ashamed. Everyone in line ahead of me has paid for their lunches, grabbed their chocolate milk, and gone off to sit with their friends.

My face starts burning. Travis laughs and the line builds up behind him. I wish so badly I would've brought my lunch from home today.

I feel so alone, so *different*. I can't even say "hotdog" without causing headaches and mockery. I'm flustered and nauseous. Ms. Trudy stares at me like I'm a pest, a fruit fly hovering over rancid food. She doesn't care about me.

"Sorry," I say to Ms. Trudy and I start walking to the back of the line without my lunch. I'll just start over.

I'm nervous walking against the line. My classmates look at me as I pass them by. I know they're whispering about me being gay,

strange, or stupid. I wish I were invisible.

And then I see Mrs. Gingerton, my teacher, standing at the back of the line, talking to a guidance counselor. The sight is a relief. I'll go say hello. Talking to her will make me feel better. She's the one person at school who treats me like I'm a human being.

I keep my eyes on Mrs. Gingerton as I make my way past my peers; it's easy to ignore them when I have somewhere to go. I'm almost to Mrs. Gingerton when I feel someone's foot catch my own. I fall to the burnt-orange ceramic tile floor. I land on my knees first, then my hands. My fingers catch under my lunch tray. I cry out in pain.

No one admits to tripping me, but everyone laughs.

"Hey, Justin, ghost faggot," yells Travis from the front of the line, "Go run to Mrs. Gingerton and tell on us, cry baby."

I look up and Mrs. Gingerton and the guidance counselor are gone.

Travis calls me "ghost" boy, queer, faggot, or some version thereof, because I suffer hallucinations in class. My mother and I witnessed her boyfriend put a gun to his head a few years back and nothing's been the same since, including my ability to speak at school. I'm permanently sheepish and proverbial low-hanging fruit to anyone looking for a laugh at someone else's expense.

I push myself off the greasy cafeteria floor, pick up my tray, and finish walking to the back of the line.

By the time I make it through the lunch line again, Ms. Trudy is out of hotdogs, but she has tater tots. I'm hungry, so they'll do.

"Ta, ta, tater tots, pl, plu, please." I force the words out just as the bell rings to end

lunch. Ms. Trudy rolls her eyes at me, tells me that lunch is over, and dumps the tater tots into the garbage.

"Sorry," I say as if I've inconvenienced her with my hunger. When I put my empty lunch tray back on the stack of clean ones, Ms. Trudy yells to me, "I saw you fall with that tray, boy. It's dirty. You put that with the dishes."

*She saw me fall and didn't help me?!*

"Sorry," I say again. I wish I were what Travis calls me. I wish I were a ghost.

Later that day Mrs. Gingerton passes out Progress Reports—bi-annual updates on our behavior, reading, and math abilities. "S" means satisfactory, the equivalent of a grade "A."

I open my Progress Report and see "S" beside every metric: "Student is silent during reading time: S." "Student completes assignments without interrupting others: S." "Student treats others with respect: S."


I'm embarrassed by it. Everyone around me talks and laughs during class; they're all friends and seem so happy. They have "Needs Improvement" beside their Progress Reports' behavioral evaluations. That's what I want. I want Needs Improvement. I want friends.

My mom cries because she's so proud of me. An "S" to her is a sign that things will be different for her son. An "S" on my Progress Report tells her that I'm early along on a path out of the food stamps and government subsidized housing she and I rely on. It means I've overcome Gene's suicide.

But I don't care. All I want are friends and to speak like a normal person. I want to be heard. I want a voice.

One day, I promise myself, I will have one. ■





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